

School opened, in 1948, Filemon and Carlos were among the first students signed up.

Filemon Vela graduated from Harlingen High School in 1954 and became a student at Texas Southmost College, Brownsville, where he was known for his quick wit and love of debate. He served in the U.S. Army from 1957 until 1959. After his army duty he enrolled in St. Mary's Law School, San Antonio, where he graduated in 1962. Although he didn't have the money to pay tuition he earned it by working in the cafeteria.

Upon graduation he practiced law in Harlingen for two years then moved to Brownsville where he practiced for 11 years, entering politics in 1971. Vela was a Brownsville City Commissioner from 1971-73 and was elected state district judge of the 107th court in 1975. In this capacity he presided over cases in Willacy County as well as in Cameron County.

In 1980 he was nominated by President Jimmy Carter to a federal judge seat in Brownsville being vacated by Judge Reynaldo Garza. He was confirmed by the Senate later that year and served until May 1, 2000 when he assumed senior status.

My family has known the Vela family since 1948. Judge Vela's brother, Moises, was my father's attorney and he was my mother's attorney. Judge Vela honored my family by swearing in my son, Dan, after he also graduated from St. Mary's Law School and passed the state bar exam. And while he was a student at St. Mary's, my son clerked for Judge Vela in Brownsville.

Some 50 years ago, my brothers and I camped with Filemon and Carlos Vela at Camp Perry, while in the Boy Scouts.

Recently Judge Vela hosted his 1949 St. Anthony School graduating class and gave his fellow classmates a tour of the new federal courthouse in Brownsville with dinner in Matamoros.

Filemon Vela was a good lawyer, a good judge, a Christian and a longtime friend. Our condolences go to his family, wife, Blanca, a daughter, and his son, Filemon, Jr., an attorney who practices in Corpus Christi.

The Editor

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HINOJOSA).

Mr. HINOJOSA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 1402, the Garza-Vela United States Courthouse Designation Act offered by my good friend and colleague, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ORTIZ).

This bill pays tribute to two great men, Federal Judge Reynaldo G. Garza and Federal Judge Filemon B. Vela, who were judicial legends in South Texas.

Judge Garza was the Nation's first Mexican American Federal district judge. Appointed to the Federal bench by President John F. Kennedy in 1961, Judge Reynaldo Garza served this Nation through the turbulent years of the civil rights movement. His decisions contributed to the changes that opened up many opportunities for minorities.

In 1976, President Carter asked him to serve as the Nation's Attorney General, but he declined because he did not want to leave his beloved South Texas and his service on the Federal bench.

He was committed to education, particularly in encouraging literacy, and he was known to all for the even-handed way in which he dispensed justice.

His last official act took place from his hospital bed when he officiated at

the swearing-in of his protege, Judge Ricardo H. Hinojosa as the new chairman of the Federal Sentencing Commission. When he passed away a few weeks ago at the age of 89, I was privileged to join the thousands of mourners in paying tribute to this outstanding and extraordinary pioneer.

I offer his wife Bertha and all his children and grandchildren my heartfelt condolences.

Judge Vela was nominated to the Federal bench by President Carter in 1980 and worked tirelessly to design and have built the new courthouse in Brownsville. It is indeed fitting that his name will be on this new Federal Courthouse.

Judge Vela, like his good friend Judge Garza, was known for his impeccable integrity and fairness on the bench. He also was passionate about teaching children about the law and the criminal justice system in order to encourage them to make the right choices in life. He would bring inmates to school to tell children about the mistakes they had made and the consequences they suffered as a result.

Judge Vela was often heard on the radio giving advice and counsel to parents and students on the importance of education. Like Judge Garza, he was also a mentor to many others in his profession.

We lost Judge Vela earlier this year. He is survived by his beautiful wife Blanca, and his three children, Filemon, Jr., Rafael, and Sylvia.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this legislation in and honor these two great Americans for their service to this Nation.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I am happy to yield such time as he may consume to my friend the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GONZALEZ).

Mr. GONZALEZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me time, and I thank my colleagues for their assistance in getting this piece of legislation to the floor, and I hope it will successfully pass with very little difficulty.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the legislation, of course, but I do want to remind individuals, and I will be quick, because I know it has been a long evening and people have a lot of business, but I think Judges Vela and Garza deserve 1 minute of praise and recognition.

In 1961 when Judge Garza was first appointed, he was the first, as has already been pointed out, Mexican American Hispanic to be appointed to the Federal bench. It was the same year that my father was elected and he was the first Hispanic from Texas to have been elected to this House.

At that time, it was such a great celebration for all of us, but the truth was, we knew that they were the first, but we did not know they were not going to be the last. Things have not turned out that way, thank God.

But truly, to honor their legacies, I had the great benefit of being coun-

seled and mentored and lectured to by both Judge Vela and Judge Garza when I was a State district judge in Texas, and I know the lessons that they imparted are still with me today, and they would reverberate today in this Chamber if they had an opportunity to meet with us, members of that other branch of government, the legislative branch, they would remind us of that incredible but very important balance and separation of powers. And their legacies will only be recognized and their contributions will only be recognized to the extent that the other two branches of government, the executive and the legislative, understand their service in the context of this wonderful, wonderful concept that we have here in the United States, in our democracy, three equal branches of government, checks and balances and separation of powers.

So I know if they were here today, they would say, "Charlie, let us do our job. Let us go ahead and review what needs to be reviewed."

It is the collective wisdom of that branch of government that really gives this Nation great guidance, as well as the leadership in this House and the leadership in the White House.

So to judges Vela and Garza, to their families, proper recognition tonight, but hopefully that in the future we honor their memory and their hard work by respecting the work that they did within the context of this wonderful framework called the United States of America.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LATOURETTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I urge our colleagues to support passage of the bill. I again want to congratulate the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON), and look forward to sporting a new Washington Delegates baseball cap in the near future.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. LATOURETTE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1402, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

The title of the bill was amended so as to read: "A bill to designate the United States courthouse located at the corner of Seventh Street and East Jackson Street in Brownsville, Texas, as the 'Reynaldo G. Garza and Filemon B. Vela United States Courthouse'."

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LATOURETTE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within

which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 5105, H.R. 3124 and H.R. 1402.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

COMMUNICATION FROM HON. NANCY PELOSI, DEMOCRATIC LEADER

The Speaker pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Honorable NANCY PELOSI, Democratic Leader:

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
OFFICE OF THE DEMOCRATIC LEADER,
Washington, DC, September 28, 2004.

Hon. J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker of the House, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to section 1012(c)(1) of the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003 42 U.S.C. 242b note, I hereby appoint Mr. Thomas M. Priselac of Los Angeles, California, to the Commission On Systemic Interoperability.

Best regards,

NANCY PELOSI.

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SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BONNER). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

ENCOURAGING PROGRESS IN IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. OSBORNE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. OSBORNE. Mr. Speaker, this past weekend, several of my colleagues and I journeyed to Baghdad and returned, and I would just like to make a few observations. Obviously, this is a very intense time in Iraq as the elections approaches, but I had three observations that I think were somewhat meaningful.

Number one, we were tremendously impressed by the morale and the attitude of our soldiers. One would say, well, how in the world could that be? It is 110, 115 degrees every day, body armor, helmets, very difficult work, some danger, considerable distance from family. I guess the main reason that we felt we were observing this was there seemed to be a very strong sense of mission, a very strong sense of purpose and accomplishment.

One thing that I often heard from the soldiers was this: they said, you know, it seems like there are two wars over here. There is the one that we see on CNN: we see the IEDs, individual explosive devices; we see the car bombs; we see the beheadings.

But the part of the story that we think is meaningful is not being told.

They said, the thing that we see is that in education, 2,500 schools have been renovated, 30,000 teachers have been trained, there is an 80 percent increase in attendance in schools, and most of that is girls who have not been going to school at all under Saddam Hussein. Health care, 240 hospitals operating, 1,000 clinics, 90 percent of the children are currently vaccinated, and this again is something that had not occurred before.

So health care has improved. Infrastructure is getting better. Water supply, power, sewage. It still needs improvement, but it is doing better, and of course the provisional government and the June 30 hand-off. So what they were saying is please make sure the people in the United States understand that there is more going on than what many times they are hearing about.

The second thing that I thought was somewhat optimistic is that the Iraqis are providing more and more security. The goal is to train 270,000 Iraqis; 135,000 police; 100,000 Army and National Guard; and then 32,000 border guards. Right now we are a little bit more than halfway there. We are making excellent progress.

So in Najef, not long ago, Iraqi troops led the charge and, along with Ayatola Sustani, calmed a very dangerous situation. So we see progressively more and more operations with Iraqis taking the lead.

The third thing that I would say that was very encouraging to me is that in talking to the Iraqis, they very much want the elections. If the Iraqis do not care or if they do not want elections, then obviously the whole thing that we are doing is for naught. I talked to an Iraqi woman today and I asked her, I said, are the Iraqis willing to line up and take the risk on Election Day, and she said, without question we will have a tremendous turnout.

So Prime Minister Allawi told us last week, and this was confirmed on our trip, that roughly 15 out of 18 provinces are sufficiently secure right now to maintain elections, and the other two or three are coming around. Splinter groups who have been primarily terrorist-oriented in the past are now becoming politically active. They are beginning to realize that if they do not become part of the political process, they are going to be left out. So a lot of things are changing very rapidly. Iraqi women will tell you this, that they see their future as being much brighter. So when there is hope, I think there is a good chance.

So if we pull out, as many are currently advising, we will tell the families of the 1,000 soldiers we have lost that they have died in vain, and I do not think we can afford to do that. Secondly, we will have broken our promise to the Iraqis. We have told them that we will absolutely not do that, and many of them have trusted us. So if we pull out now, literally tens of thousands of Iraqis are going to lose their lives and will be sacrificed because of our duplicity.

Thirdly, I think if we show vulnerability as a Nation; and if we show that we do not have resolve and that we will not see something through, and if terrorists can steer our agenda here, we become more and more vulnerable to terrorist activities. So I do not think that we can afford to do this.

So at this point, as I see it, and I think some of those who were on the trip would also say that the only viable exit strategy is to win. When we say to win, we mean that we will stay the course until the Iraqis themselves are able to secure their country and be able to govern their country. This is not going to be easy, but we think it is doable. We were encouraged by what we saw.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. PALLONE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take my Special Order at this time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

SMART SECURITY AND IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, the Bush administration loves to tout George W. Bush's willingness to stay the course as the source of his strength as a President. Day after day, the President and his surrogates use this "resolve" to demonstrate why he should be reelected.

The sad truth is that President Bush's resolve amounts to little more than a campaign tool to disguise the fact that his administration's policies have increasingly made Americans far less safe in the world. The President's resolve is actually nothing more than his attempt to lead our Nation while wearing blinders.

President Bush failed to demonstrate resolve in fighting terrorism in the days before the September 11 terrorist attack. In fact, he vacationed at his ranch in Crawford, Texas, for the entire month of August in the year 2001, neglecting to act on his daily intelligence briefings which specifically warned against terrorists crashing planes into large city buildings.

Since September 11, President Bush has continued to fail in his resolve to fight international terrorism. Despite a promise to apprehend Osama bin Laden, dead or alive, President Bush actually pulled troops out of Afghanistan in the year 2002. This grave error